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## Shoelses rip fund's 'misuse'

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**Sept. 15** - NEW YORK - Standing alongside the Rev. Al Sharpton, the family of slain Columbine High student Isaiah Shoels on Tuesday accused the Healing Fund of misappropriating funds and called on the public to stop donating to the United Way.

Michael and Vonda Shoels and family spokesman Sam Riddle also criticized the White House for reneging on a promise to help them move out of Jefferson County, and Sharpton urged the federal government to launch a hate-crime grand-jury investigation into the April 20 massacre.

"We're calling on this nation to immediately stop giving money to the United Way until we have a complete accounting of what I refer to as the charity industry ripoff in Colorado," Riddle said at a press conference. "They raised millions of dollars in Colorado, and less than 20 percent of those millions have gone to the families."

An emotional Michael Shoels said it's been hard for his family to function since the shootings, and more financial assistance from the Healing Fund would have helped.

"I want everybody to know that we are in desperate need as a family unit," Shoels said. "My wife, my kids, they need counseling. And that Healing Fund was supposed to be for some of that counseling."

The Shoelses are in New York as part of a nationwide tour speaking out against violence and hate. They were in Michigan over the weekend and are scheduled to stop in Birmingham, Ala.; Houston; and New York again next month.

A spokeswoman for the Mile High United Way and its Healing Fund said 64 percent, or \$2.8 million, of the \$4.4 million raised by the fund went directly to families of the slain and injured. That includes \$50,000 each to the Shoelses and the other 12 families of the dead. The remaining money went to various anti-violence, mentalhealth and other community programs.

Riddle and the Shoelses said Tuesday the distribution of the money should be investigated and fully disclosed to the public.

The Shoelses had made additional requests to the Healing Fund for money for a new house in Denver, to help send two of their other children to private schools and to get private counseling for their kids. The Healing Fund denied those requests.

"We're disappointed that the Shoels family feels this way," fund spokeswoman Kelley Cahill said. "We've provided all the families with assistance. The Healing Fund felt that some of the (extra) requests were not in line for what the fund was set up for."

The Shoelses also criticized President Clinton and Hillary Rodham Clinton - who's expected to run for U.S. Senate in New York - for failing to follow through on offers of help when they visited Jefferson County in May.

The Shoelses have moved out of their Littleton home, saying they didn't feel safe, and are trying to relocate to Denver. They spend each night in motels, and their children are staying with relatives.

"When we sat down with the president, and she who would lead you in New York, the first lady Hillary Clinton, they made a commitment to help this family," Riddle said. "And it's been a trail of broken promises. The president and Mrs. Clinton have let this family down."

A White House spokeswoman said late Tuesday that the president was headed back to the United States from New Zealand and hadn't been briefed about the Shoelses' criticisms over the housing issue. But she said the Justice Department has provided financial aid to Jefferson County in part to help victims.

"And of course we sympathize with the family," she said. "They've experienced a tragedy no family should ever have to experience."

The first lady's press office could not be reached.

As Hillary Clinton prepares her likely Senate bid, she and the president have bought a home there and intend to spend \$1 million on a security system, Riddle said.

He said a fraction of that money "would put the Shoels family under one roof, so they can quit shuffling from Super 8 to Super 8 while their kids stay with grandparents. We want the Shoels in housing in Colorado as soon as possible, and we call on the president and first lady to lead that effort." To the voters of New York, he added: "If she can't help them and honor her commitment that they made when they met with us in Colorado, how can she make any commitment to you?"

Sharpton called on U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno to convene a grand jury to investigate the massacre carried out by students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. Witnesses said Harris and Klebold called Isaiah Shoels a racial slur before shooting him in the school's library. Isaiah was one of just a few African-American students at Columbine and the only black student killed.

"Hate crimes must be fought whether it's in Columbine or whether it's in Los Angeles," Sharpton said. "And there cannot be any distinguishing between the two."

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